A STUDY ON TEACHING ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS THROUGH CARTOONS

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ABSTRACT

English is taught as an important subject right from the primary level in the school curriculum, yet students are not able to read and write in English properly. The teaching and learning of this subject is not taken seriously by those who are involved in it. As a result students don't feel motivated to learn this language. In the middle classes when writing skills come into picture, it becomes tedious for student to understand and it creates a fear for the subject. students try to cram the sentences and fail to produce the language. Gradually the interest is lost and the classroom becomes fearful. The present study focuses on the use of cartoons as an instructional material which has alleged benefits which includes the promotion of understanding, increased attention and interest, motivation towards learning. The study focuses on middle level students who have just shifted their attention from language development to literary development. The main objective of this study was to find out the effectiveness of teaching English writing skills by using cartoons. The method of the research was experimental. The data were obtained by giving test to the experimental group and controlled group. The number of the subjects was 30 students in each class where experimental class (the students who were taught using cartoons), controlled class (the students who were not taught using cartoons). The instruments used to collect the data were feedback forms and Achievement test. Pre-test and Post-test were conducted. For Statistical Analysis t test was used. The result revealed the improvement in writing skills and students showed interest in the English classroom.

KEYWORDS: cartoons, writing skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

The major hindrance in learning a language is considering it as a CONTENT SUBJECT. Language is not a content subject it is essentially a skill it is not a content subject like science social studies commerce which aim at imparting information and fill the human mind with knowledge. Skill subjects including Singing, Dancing, Swimming and Drawing fall under psychomotor domain. A skill maybe called as the ability to do something well. It must be remembered that language is a complex skill involving four sub skills

•   Listening
•   Speaking
•   Reading
•   Writing

A skill demands strategies which gives more and more exposure and practice in the real context. Hence, English language requires more and more exposure and practice in real life situation. The strategies which include activities should be introduced in the classroom by the teacher. More emphasis should be given to produce the language not to cram it. Different strategies which can be used even when the teacher is not present can help student in gaining competence in the language. The strategy which is simply based on lecture and explanation makes the class dull and boring. The pupils lose interest in the class and if it is matter of achieving good result it creates stress in them. teachers with their expertise can definitely bring the change in today's scenario. One teaching instrument which perhaps is seldom used, is the 'CARTOON'. The term 'cartoon' is used as a term to include stand alone illustrations, captioned or non-captioned, television or movie cartoons and short comic strip formats, which makes a potentially valuable contribution. Visually, the impact is immediate, and all students, irrespective of age or background, are able to respond in some way to the educational point being made. The value of humour in the teaching and learning process is reasonably well recognized, particularly in the establishment of a positive learning environment (Sever & Ungar, 1997) as well as in the relationship between teachers and students (Pollack & Freda, 1999).

II. Status of English Language in India

English has an important place right from the British era. Since independence, English language continued to be taught in Indian schools, though in limited schools and colleges initially. With passage of time the use of English increased resulting in a shift of its status. A sizeable group of native Indians emerged by the time in India who's higher social status was dependent on their good acquisition of English. Increased English language proficiency was considered instrumental in fetching well paid job opportunities. The language, thus, got recognized as an important link language for national and international purposes. Owing to the increasing importance of English, in the changing times, various states in India gave the language a respectable place by making it a compulsory language in their educational setup.

In Rajasthan earlier English started from VI standard but now it starts from standard I. The revolution in the field of information technology has also contributed mostly in the wider use of English at the earlier stage of schooling. English thus became the primary requirement for interconnectedness of people, for free exchange of ideas, cultures and economies and a 'Lingua Franca' for communication, business and education.

Thus, it becomes clear that English, the language imposed during British Raj has deeply rooted in India, and by now has almost become part and parcel of our day-to-day life.

The importance of English has been fully realized by various education commissions appointed by the government of India.

The University Education Commission headed by S. Radhakrishnan in 1950-51 reported:
"…the English language has been one of the potent factors in the development of unity in the country. In fact, the concept of nationality and the sentiment of nationalism are largely the gift of English language and literature to India".

Many other commissions and agencies including-the Kunzru commission, Mudiliyar, Kothari, V.K. Gokak, G.K. Chandramani, the Central Advisory Board of Education, Inter University Board, and Official Language Commission etc., also have reviewed the place of English in Indian Education from time to time. All the reports reflect the strong hold of English on Indian minds and acknowledge its important role in India.

The CABE devised the three-language formula in its 23rd meeting held in 1956 with a view to removing inequalities among73 the languages of India. It recommended that three languages should be taught in the Hindi as well as non-Hindi speaking areas.

Thus, with a brief summary it is clear that how much importance have been given to English in India, yet we have failed in making our English classroom effective. We have created such hype for the language that even a slight mistake is unpardonable. We have not learnt to handle the language and make maximum use of it. In the present context English is no more confined to high class or highly educated people. Due to the advancement of technology it is even spoken in rural areas. This has increased the responsibility; we are bound to create such language classrooms which are linked to day to day life.

The major challenge in learning English is our defective techniques in the classroom. With this students are not able to cope up and frustration prevails. The teacher himself is not skilled in the language and his own frustration is transferred to the students. This inefficiency to teach and moreover lack of proper techniques creates fear, anxiety and boredom in the classroom.

III. Present Scenario of Teaching English Language in India

The current scene of English Language teaching in India is not pleasant one. English is taught as an important subject right from the primary level in the school curriculum, yet students are not able to read and write in English properly. The teaching and learning of this subject is not taken seriously by those who are involved in it. As a result students don't feel motivated to learn this language. In

the middle classes when Grammar becomes more complex, it becomes tedious for student to understand and it creates a fear for the subject. It is oblivious of the fact that the most applied subject English is devoid of practical afflatus and it is at Crossroads. Both aspects of education the cultural that empowers a learner to grow and the productive aspect that makes him do things are allocated to the background curriculum thus stands lopsided. It fails to provide full range of services and cannot tap teacher's expertise. Teachers in a hurry to finish the syllabus cannot focus on the practical aspect of English.

The case is even worse in the government school where the practical implication of English is often overlooked; the use of translation method in the mother tongue never allows them to achieve expertise in the English language. In the private school although more emphasis is given on English and even the transaction is in English yet student fails to produce the language.

IV. Cartoons
The word 'cartoon' comes from the Italian word 'cartone'. Earlier the painters of Renaissance before putting oil on canvas, would draw a quick sketch on an inexpensive paper called 'cartone'. (Page 1. www.mikeartel.com).A cartoon is a visual art and illustration. They are satirical drawings, a humorous drawing highly stimulating, eye catchy and they have great visual impact. Cartoon which educates children is a pictorial representation or a caricature of a person, an idea or a situation designed to influence public opinion.

Although, cartooning is considered a visual art form, it relies as much on other creative skills such as humour and timing as it does on drawing ability. Some of the most popular and familiar cartoons are not always examples of the best illustration skills. Comic strips such as Cathy and Dilbert rely much more on the cartoonist's ability to write and think funny than they do on the cartoonist's ability to draw well.

Cartoons have been a favourite for people of all ages. A person will be happy just by watching cartoons on television or by reading cartoons as in comics. Cartoon allows one to release one's stress.

V. Related researches on Cartoons
Students are often reading cartoons in their own language or in a second language and thus, they are able to identify and understand easily with this medium. Reading cartoons in second language learning would motivate, enhance and increase the vocabulary in the target language. Nunan (1999) states that materials are essential for enhancing second language learning. Normaliza Abd Rahim & Nik Ismail Harun (2011) agreed with Nunan (1999), stating that learning should come with motivation. Hence, learning should be fun and entertaining (Rahim, 2011; Rahim & Roslan, 2012). Tanner & Green (2002) research and observe that many materials for EFL teaching using communicative approach do not provide enough variety of idiom, colloquialism, and slang, which are part of everyday conversation. Cartoons are a means by which students can simultaneously widen and increase their vocabulary, and also improve their knowledge of the syntax, grammar and semantics of the language (Tanner & Green, 2002). Besides having cartoons in second language learning, it has also been used in other subjects as a medium of learning. A study by Cho (2012) with both students and teachers reported positive results from using cartoons in a mathematics classroom. The results revealed that students became more open as time progressed and thus, it was possible to see their mathematical insights. The subjects did not enjoy easy cartoon activities, but rather asked for challenging ones. Their frustration at difficult-to-understand activities portrays the importance of carefully matching cartoon activities to student abilities and hence, it showed their enthusiasm toward learning. Margono, Nim (2010) "The effectiveness of teaching English verbs by using cartoon film". The main objective of this study is to find out the effectiveness of teaching English verbs by using cartoon films. The method of the research is an experimental study. The results were positive and showed effective changes.

VI. OBJECTIVE
1. To study the effectiveness of teaching writing skills through cartoons.

2. To suggest a guideline for using cartoons in classroom.

VII. Experimental Design
In the present study Experimental method was used. The design for the experiment was –

'Pre-Test Post-Test design'

VIII. Statistical Techniques
In the present research Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software was used to analyse the data through following techniques –
1. Mean
2. Standard Deviation
3. Paired sample t Test

IX. HYPOTHESIS
There is no significant difference between mean scores of Experimental and controlled group.

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental group	33.47	30	5.877	1.073
controlled group	20.80	30	5.744	1.049

Paired Samples Test								
	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Experimental group - controlled group	1.2671	5.591	1.021	1.0581	1.4751	1.2411	29	.000

It is quite evident from the tables that the mean scores of experimental group is 33.47 and 20. Controlled group is 20.80; to find out that this difference is significant t-test was used. The t-value obtained was 1.2411 with a degree of freedom2 9 and the p-value .000 which is mentioned in last column(less than both the significant .01 and .05 levels). This shows that difference is significant. Hence, the null hypothesis that "there is no significant difference between mean scores of Experimental and Controlled group" is rejected at both levels of significance.

Conclusively it may be stated that this difference may have been due to the exposure of cartoons. The students showed positive signs of acquiring writing skills in English. The classroom was more interesting for them.

X. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The result reveals that there is significant difference in scores of the achievement of VIII grade students. Conclusively, it may be stated that the significant difference (as observed above) may have been due to the exposure provided to the students of cartoons. The student's scores were improved as well as they got more interested in the English class. The students writing skills were enhanced and the learning became Joyful.

XI. A SUGGESTIVE GUIDELINE
During the process of experimentation it was found that proper implementation and planning can organise the whole processs. There were so many things which could be done to make the lessons more effective. To make proper use of cartoons in the classes a suggestive guideline has come up during the process of experimentation -

Preparation Phase
1. Selection of the Cartoons is required to be according to the level of the students.

2. The cartoon strips chosen should be able to evoke imagination.

3. Topic selected from English writing skills need to be from simple to complex.

4. Tasks need to be framed for each phase where student's involvement can be ensured.

5. Cartoon strips used for each phase are supposed to be different to maintain curiosity till the end.

6. The animated audio visual screen is required to be prepared earlier.

Transaction Phase
• The teacher is required to ensure that the classroom climate remains friendly.

• Maximum involvement of the students is highly appreciable.

• Students are required to come up with their own answers nothing should be supplied as it is, this will keep them involved.
• The group activities are required to be facilitated and monitored by the teacher continuously.

• Too much of enthusiasm of students sometime hinders the progress of the lesson; it can be controlled by the teacher.

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